The Art of Giving & Receiving Advice

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YKPSP Corner

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What Ought I to do?

What do you do when you’re at a crossroad, do not know which direction to take? Or when you can’t figure out how to complete a challenging task at work Or you’re trying on a makeup at Sephora and unsure of which shades of eyeshadow to buy after rounds and rounds of swatches?

In life, when you’re stuck in a conundrum, there are many solutions. Well, you could invest more time and effort by thinking hard, figuring out by yourself, searching the net for answers, or if you are someone of high spiritual, you could “talk” to God.

There is one thing most people do: asking for advice. I, personally, like asking for advice. Asking for advice doesn’t make me weak or an indecisive person. I ask for advice to brainstorm. Well, I want to hear how other people might understand a situation, and it helps me get a better perspective. The advices I received would allow me to assess a variety of possibilities, and to consider whether I have missed anything. It doesn’t mean I will take it 100% or follow it blindly. It makes no sense at all to expect a person requesting advice to feel obligated to act on whatever completely unpredictable suggestion you will offer, without knowing what you are going to say, right? I ask for advice and I give advice to others. So, I am completely ok if people don’t follow my advice.

I would normally ask more than one person for advise. And then I would formulate my own idea of how I want to handle the situation.

In most cases in life, whenever people ask for the opinions of others, those people have already made their mind on the issue and are subconsciously hoping for validation of their view. It is a nice feeling to hear someone echo your own views back at you! Hence, the reason why I seek for advice in the first place.

People do like to come to me for advise – not to say I’m an expert or anything but maybe they feel comfortable talking to me. At times, I would be clueless – not knowing what to say because I don’t feel qualified to give advice but I feel compelled to say something.

I feel obliged to help them solve the problems at first. Later, I realised that I can’t decide for them. I can help to advise but it is entirely their decision whether they want to follow my advise or not (since I don’t follow people’s advise most of the time anyway). So, it’s OK!

Well, sometimes, you just have to accept the fact that you can’t, at least not instantly, help someone when they’re in trouble. But I guess it is OK. People come to me usually just to pour themselves out. They just need an ear, a shoulder, a punching bag or a hug! They sometimes need someone by their side to go through difficult time. Help them to pull themselves together. They don’t actually came to me for answers because most of the time they already know the answers.

So, I am more that happy to offer all that and of course valuable advice when really needed too.

Yours Truly,

Lina
Having lived for nearly a fifth of a century, I still wake up questioning what to do next. Still in the prime of my youth, I’ve yet to fully grasp the opportunities that have been laid before me. Two sentences later, I received yet another lecture of my life. Ayah scolds me for waking up so late, and Ibu wants me to hang our clothes on the clothesline. Ten minutes have passed, and I haven’t made a single dent in the pile of dripping wet washing.

A few sighs later, Ibu says, “Kalau Ibu suruh Syarifatul (My younger sister) buat apa - apa! Tak akan mengeluh sikit pun. Ya Ibu, dia akan kata. Danial, grow up-lah. Dah nak dewasa dah pun!”

A lot of the time, words can be hard to swallow. Advice tends to make us feel belittled so a quickfire response sounds like “Alaaa..”, ”ugh“ or ”.. Tapi abang/kakak letihlah… “ etc etc. Without much thought, we are quick to become in denial of our own acts. We think to ourselves that we’ve done nothing wrong.

However, being placed in the shoes of Danial, it’s hard to judge right and wrong in the presence of bias and self-righteousness, which is why he attracts judgement that admonishes the wrongs. The opposite goes for the perspective of a person who witnesses him in action. Most definitely, words of advice from parents and our elderly are intended to highlight the things we’ve been doing wrong, be it deliberately or by accident. Ultimately, it is a game of choice. To accept their judgement is to be humbled and truthful to oneself, and to reject advice is to be stubborn and even narcissistic.

After all, it is your life. You get to decide who’s right or wrong really.

This brings me to the other half of this post. The type of advice you’ll be thankful for neglect. At school or on an average day, you may be presented with an opportunity to do something others usually won’t. You might be singing in the Khazanah dinner, acting in the school play or taking part in World Scholars Cup, or none of the above.


Well, you will get it wrong. You will get it wrong if you listen to your friend. I’m in no place to say, but a peer who cares for you sees the benefit of participation rather than discouraging extracurricular involvement. When the opportunity presents itself, half of you wants to hear them say “maybe next year” and “maybe next time” while the other half of you is actually really keen on throwing yourself out there.

And at the end of the day, life is that ‘game of choice’. By now, you should have realised the types of advice that are worth a listen and the ones to neglect. In the next 20 years, as you look back at younger days, you will be more upset with the things you haven’t done than the things you’ve actually achieved. So, in this life, love it and cherish the highs and learn from the lows, and don’t ever blame others for the things you could’ve become and couldn’t achieve.
To say I am nervous is an understatement. After five years of being in an all-boys school's environment, I realized the awkwardness and struggled to remain calm. But what I realized was that they were suddenly quiet when I entered the hall, followed by the sound of murmurs and whispers. I purposefully slid jokes about current trends like K-pop and the latest drama TV shows in my presentation to break the ice and to engage with the audience. Thank god, it was received very well. When I look back, out of the three schools, the students at this school was the most responsive to my jokes. When I did my Q&A session, nobody had any questions. Then I started to ask a few students about their problems which relates to their studies, social life as well as their time management. After I ended my presentation, as I was invited to lunch, the teachers told me they had never seen the students listening so attentively to a talk. They suggested a reason for that is maybe because I was a handsome young man (Haha) who the students might find interesting to pay attention to compared to other speakers who were usually much older. Although I only agree to a certain part of it, I believe it is more about the ability to draw attention and being able to relate with the audience.

In my second talk, I was on a familiar ground as I too was from a fully-residential school. Government boarding schools in Malaysia usually select students based on their good results during their primary school, which was why I expected a better response to my talk. I got a night slot and the venue was in the surau. Compared to all the three schools, this was seen to be the most interested in what I had to say. At no point in my presentation were there any disruptions or people minding their own business – everyone was focused. The Q&A session was better; students were asking so many questions until we were running out of time, so I left my Instagram account for them to reach out to me.

My last talk was the most memorable one. We had to drive through slim snaky roads to get to this one. It was clear that the area was nothing but a typical rural village, with palm oil plantations, paddy fields and the old wooden houses covering our view. When I arrived at the school, the hospitality was amazing as I was escorted to the waiting room filled with a scrumptious breakfast. Let me remind you that this is the only school with such a gesture. My slot was right after an anti-bullying talk from the local Police Department. Just as I suspected, the students were not in their best condition to listen to another talk. In order to grab their attention, I tried my best to make the talk fun, talk about the common ground i.e. I am a hometown boy and facing almost the same challenges which any teenagers do. Sadly, throughout the Q&A session, most of them do not have the intention to do well in school. They have the mindset that they cannot achieve greater things in life other than helping their parent’s food stall or farming at their parent’s orchard. It occurred to me that it is not fair for them as they never had the exposure to see their abilities and potentials. I shared my own experience towards setting up my goals. Sacrifices that come along the way and the importance for everyone to strive and do their best in school to have a better chance and opportunity to further their studies and plan their bright future ahead. In the hopes that they would be inspired to be more than what they think they could be.

I learnt a myriad of lessons throughout my journey delivering presentations to the three schools. The most valuable amongst the rest is that when giving advice, it is best if we can beforehand do our homework and understand the background or the story of the one who would receive the advice. We can connect better when we comprehend the challenges and struggles they are facing. Also, when giving advice, it is best if we can develop and engage a good relationship with the receiver which can be done by finding a common interest. They will then be more open to new ideas.
In some scenarios, advice is severely underrated and is seen as nagging, dictating and can become intrusive. In other scenarios, advice is overly revered, seen as gospels of the superior which must be adhered to; completely disregarding the liberty of one’s own conduct. Now, finding the middle ground, in which advice is crucially appreciated and is not overbearing to one’s choice is the art of giving and receiving advice.

Our education system and its attempt to diversify the hues of interpersonal skills harp actively on “soft skill” or communication skills. But unfortunately, rarely does this skill encompasses the effective imparting of advice nor the effective acceptance and subsequently employment of said advice.

According to the Harvard Business Review from the January-February Issue 2015, in an article entitled “The art of giving and receiving advice” (ironically enough that is), giving and receiving advice is a passive form of wisdom transfer. I believe in the use of “wisdom” which makes advices unique and directed. Cleverness and intelligence sharpened with years of formal education or geniuses by miracles of God’s blessing are not the same as wisdom. Wisdom moulds itself with time and flourishes with experience.

In order for an effective transfer of wisdom, i.e. advice; biasness and closed-mindedness have to be removed. Often this is stressed upon the receiver and not so much on the giver. Undeniably, the receiver must learn to accept and analyse guidance that sometimes may not be favourable to them. It takes an eagle-view perspective, one cannot be too cooked up on their own plight and angle of story. Advices are neutral and objective judgements which help the receiver to scrutinise one’s conduct/action with an outer view, that is one filled with experience. It takes one to be able to discern objectively, in order to become wise.

And perhaps this is the nascency of wisdom that is polished from the unvarnished vigour and intelligence. On the giver, again, the need for impartial judgement and open-mindedness is vital. If the giver and receiver are put on scale, often, the giver sits on a higher level. But such position is so easily abused, and such power of wisdom transfer is so easily poorly disposed especially if the receiver is impressionable. Givers have the influence of shaping thinking and empowering the receiver. Givers are in a way, fuel-lers; what they fuel into the minds of receivers, does play a role on the receiver’s outlook. Advices should not be infused with propaganda or lopsided judgements of what is right and wrong. And most importantly, advices shall not be structured to impede growth or demolish personal identity of the receiver. For this, the giver must understand the limitations of one’s own wisdom, and the possibility of being enveloped by complacency. One must perceive deeper, and this cannot be done by remaining on the high seat all the time.

The art of giving and receiving advice therefore requires mutual respect and willingness to listen. Receivers ought not seek givers with the intention of affirming their egos. Receivers must seek to get critical and creative input, and not define issues at hand narrowly. On the givers part, it’s important to communicate the wisdom with empathy and understanding. It’s not about thrusting one’s accomplishment to another, nor is it intimidating by leveraging off insecurity. Above all, it is also the acceptance that the advice given may not be used entirely or used at all.

At the basis of it all, people need each other to improve each other. And because of this, advice is a tool of crucial communicative element as evidence of human’s interdependence, and subsequently, the positive results of this interdependence. There is no one answer to the art of giving and receiving advice, it ultimately comes down to the specific situation and the specific people involved. One factor holds firm, that advices shall never be dictated nor shall it be venerated. The art of giving and receiving lies in the constant affirmation of continuous learning process.
A survey was conducted to get people’s opinion on the arts of giving and receiving advice.

The result shows that 71 percent agreed that they can accept advices from any person and the remaining 29 percent can’t.

The survey also revealed that the reasons for not being able to accept advices among others are advice received from wrong person, at the wrong time, not in an appropriate way, ego issues and etc.

For question on from whom people can receive advice from, well most people said their immediate family members like father, mother and siblings. Some said their good friends. In general someone they cared about and vice versa.

From this result, I start searching the true meaning of advice and the arts of giving and receiving advice.

What is the advice?

Advice likewise called exhortation is a type of relating individual or institutional opinions, recommendations or guidance about certain circumstances relayed in some context to another person, group or party often offered as a guide to action and behaviour. Also the advice message is a recommendation about what might be thought, said, or otherwise done to address a problem, make a decision, or manage a situation.

Advice is an opinion that you give or receive. If you need guidance, ask someone for advice on a matter. If you can give guidance, advise someone on a matter.

Why You Need To Ask for Advice

Raul Valdes-Perez has a book named Advice is for Winners, the author highlights six other by-products of seeking advice:

**Pointers**

You may receive a referral to (1) an individual you don’t know, (2) a document you didn’t know existed, or (3) insider knowledge and exclusive opinions not publicly available. An advisor can highlight potential roadblocks or obstacles you might face. You may also be advised to take actions you never would have considered otherwise.

**Framing**

After talking with someone, you may get a new perspective on your problem. You may realize the solution looks different that you imagined. You may find a root cause to address instead. You may even be prompted to change your goal!

**Validation/Confidence**

After a failure, do you second guess yourself? Getting a second opinion—from outside your head—can provide validation for the course of action you have chosen to take and re-energize you with newfound confidence. An advisor can assist with decision-making by confirming your plan makes sense or sharing a success story.

**Accountability/Support**

When someone provides advice, they become more deeply involved and, in turn, motivated to see you succeed. It works both ways—you also become accountable for either following or dismissing the advice and especially for taking action. Recall that asking for advice (consultation) can be an influence tactic, if it’s authentic and not merely a manipulative move.

**Legitimation**

The advisor’s credibility, expertise, and experience finally makes everything click. The advice itself might be generic—freely available in blogs, articles, books, etc. The advice may have been previously given by family members, a spouse, or friends. But someone with credibility can create a compelling case or share a story that finally provides the inspiration to act. In this case it’s not the advice, but who it comes from.

**Engagement**

Even if the practice of advice-seeking results nothing useful in terms of solutions, the experience of advice-seeking creates an interaction with a positive result. People generally like to give advice and they like to be asked to give advice so it’s not really a burden to them. You are having a meaningful discussion with someone you hold in high regard professionally. In this way, you are building social capital with your network.

**Who can give an advice?**

**Life advice**

If you are looking for life advice, you should seek out someone who is wise. In my experience the best advice comes from those who are reluctant to give it unless they are asked. Giving advice for them is not an ego trip and if anything they consider it a responsibility that comes with at least a slight burden attached.

**Science Advice:**

If you’re looking for tax advice or medical advice, you should consult someone with professional training. Knowledge and experience are of utmost importance for such things.
10 Tips to Advise Wisely: How to Give Advice That Actually Helps!

1. Advise with permission.

When you care about someone and think you know how to improve their situation, it’s tempting to play amateur psychiatrist—especially if you’ve been there before. If you’ve ever been on the couch-end of this scenario, you know it can be frustrating. If you feel the need to offer unsolicited advice, ask them, “Do you want some ideas to improve the situation?” This way they have the option to say no, and they’ll likely give you more attention when they’ve agreed to take your help.

2. Give them a rant window.

Oftentimes when people ask for advice, what they really want is to rehash something they can’t get off their mind—something they’ve probably talked about repeatedly to lots of different people (maybe even someone who’d listen). The best way to be a friend is to enable both what they want to do and what they need to do. Want: tell the story repeatedly, as if they can change how they feel if they just talk about it enough. Need: work through it and let it go. Tell them you’re there to listen to everything they need to say. Once they’ve gotten all out, you’d love to help them move on.

3. Be honest.

If you don’t know how someone feels, you can’t truthfully say, “I know how you feel.” That’s okay. You can likely still empathize on some level. Let them know, gently, that you haven’t been there before, but you’ll try to put yourself in their shoes to help as best you can.

Also, don’t be afraid to let them know you don’t have anything to say. You can still be an ear, take some time to think about it, and then share your thoughts later.

4. Avoid judging.

When someone comes to you for help, odds are they already feel pretty vulnerable. They’re trusting you to hear them out without being judgmental or condescending.

Rather than beginning your advice with, “You should have,” or “Why didn’t you...?” realize what’s done is done, and focus on what they can do or change right now. Try something like, “It might help to consider...” Then, offer your support along the path.

5. Make it a collaboration.

It can feel gratifying to figure out what seems like the answer and then deliver it in a sermon. It’s like being a good advice detective when you figure out exactly what someone should or can do, and you feel even better when you can put it all into words eloquently.

But this can also come off as superiority, which probably isn’t your intention. Try, “I don’t have all the answers, but I’d love to help you figure out what’s right for you.” Whenever you’ve talked for a few minutes, bring it back to them. “What are your thoughts about that?”

6. Offer long-term support.

Your sister doesn’t want just a list of ways to break up with her boyfriend; she wants help finding the courage to do it and get through it. Your friend doesn’t just want tips to switch careers; she wants support in making a scary but positive change. It doesn’t matter so much that you have all the answers. More often than not, people know what’s right for them; they just want to feel validated and supported.

7. Don’t make promises.

Even if you’ve been there before, you can’t guarantee any specific outcome. Your friend could approach her boss exactly like you did for a raise and end up being demoted—at which point she might blame you. Keep expectations realistic by focusing on possibilities within the realm of uncertainty. If you tell your sister to take a risk, make sure she knows it is a risk. Help her weigh the possible outcomes, both positive and negative so she can decide if it’s worth the potential reward.

8. Recommend a read.

When you make the proactive decision to find answers for yourself, you feel both empowered and confident in your ability to make the right decision. You can help your friend feel that way by pointing him in the direction of a few books that will help him help himself. He’ll feel much better himself after gaining a new insight through reading than he will after sitting through a lecture. Start by saying, “I came across something that might help put things in perspective...”

9. Say it from the heart.

Another option is to be there with kindness instead of words. This is a good approach if you’ve already offered advice on the problem, and realize not much you say will help. Leave a handwritten “thinking of you” card in that person’s mailbox or mail them a package with some sweet treats and light reads. Sometimes people just need to remember their problem isn’t the end of the world and there are lots of other good things in their life.
10. Make plans.
You’re not the go-to guru for all answers—and you don’t have to be—but you have the power to make other things happen. Plan a fun weekend getaway or day trip (for the budget-conscious) with your friend. Set the date in stone and make an unforgettable memory. People often find answers for themselves when they get away, let themselves relax, and clear their head for a while.

Stage for giving and receiving advice
Here are the simplified five stages of advising:
Stage 1: Find the right fit
Stage 2: Develop a shared understanding
Stage 3: Craft alternatives
Stage 4: Converge on a decision
Stage 5: Put advice into action

Name: Mohamed Imran bin Mohamed Ishak
Course: Master of Science in Pharmacology
University: University of Oxford
What year did you graduate? 2012
Current employer: Gleneagles Medini Johor Hospital (A branch of Pantai Medical Centre Sdn Bhd)
Current Position: Commercial Manager

Tell us a bit about your current role:

My current position in the organisation is as a Commercial Manager. This role entails coordinating the sales of our medical office suites, assisting our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with daily hospital operations, and coordinating and preparing the yearly hospital budget and 5 Year Strategic Plan for the hospital 2019 – 2023. I began my journey with Parkway Pantai as a Management Trainee in Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur Hospital and my main role then was learning overall hospital operations workflow and processes. After 1.5 years as a Management Trainee, I was chosen and appointed as the Operations Executive for Gleneagles Medini Johor Hospital, a greenfield tertiary care hospital. As the first employee for Gleneagles Medini Johor Hospital, I was tasked as the main lead and coordinator for the setup and operationalisation of the hospital, to oversee the construction of the building, working closely with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in procuring equipment and instruments, hiring people, and in engagement with specialist doctors.

I served in this capacity for 2.75 years during the construction of the hospital and in its first year of operations before I was promoted to my current role as Commercial Manager.

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Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

With the fast-growing nature of Parkway Pantai and with many opportunities becoming available in the near future, in my capacity, I see myself serving as a CEO of a Parkway Pantai Hospital. I am also amenable to any other opportunities that may avail itself within the Khazanah group.

How has Yayasan Khazanah (YK) helped you realize your dreams/aspirations? Any specific interventions provided by YK that you wish to share?

I am eternally grateful to YK for providing me with the opportunity to broaden my horizon. I have always wanted to see the world, to live in company of people with different cultures than my own, and YK made it possible for me. I have always wanted to study and learn alongside with the best and brightest minds in the world, in one of the best and most reputed university in the world, the University of Oxford, and YK made it possible for me. When I first began my journey with YK, my aspiration was to become either a researcher or academician. YK has provided me the chance to explore other avenues. Avenues that I had not even considered. Through YK, I was introduced to Parkway Pantai, a subsidiary of IHH Healthcare Berhad, and ever since are having a rewarding career and development, starting off as a Management Trainee, to being designated as Operations Executive, with the opportunity to lead and setup a greenfield tertiary care hospital, Gleneagles Medini Johor Hospital, which is on its way to becoming the flagship hospital for Parkway Pantai in the Southern Region of Malaysia, to now being tasked as Commercial Manager, for the sales of our medical office suites and in preparing the 5 year strategic plan for Gleneagles Medini Johor Hospital. YK has given me this opportunity realise my potential, to serve and contribute to Malaysia through Parkway Pantai and in my own personal growth. Thank you, YK.

Any advice to current student?

Learn to enjoy putting yourself in situations you are not comfortable with, especially when it comes to accepting work tasks that you have not done before or have little experience with, that is the best way to grow, at least in my opinion. Be eager to learn, much of what you have studied in university might not be applicable in your daily work. What will set you apart is your attitude, your ability to learn new skills and knowledge, to align your career goals with your own personal strength, much of which can only be discovered by trying new things. The biggest impediment to personal growth is being in a comfort zone, to be stagnant, and not challenged in any way, as the ancient Zen saying goes, “Empty your cup”.

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Align your career goals with that of your organisation, by finding ways in which you can add value to the organisation. Be resilient, be adaptable! If I were to use PC games as an analogy, you need to learn to level up by going through the experiences, the journey, only then will higher more difficult levels be made open and accessible to you. Among the essence of working in large organisations are the ability to collaborate, cooperate, and coordinate with various stakeholders, both internal and external in order to leverage on each other and achieve organisational objectives and goals. Last but not least, have fun and enjoy the journey!

Glamour, Glitter & Glitz - Our theme for Gala Dinner 2019, primarily aims to recognise scholars' achievements and a platform for engagement and networking.
Yayasan Khazanah Leadership Conference ("YKLC") is organised annually as part of the scholars development interventions. YKLC also serves as a platform to gather all our scholars and to share with them various topics on leadership for their personal and professional development. This year, the theme was “Explore Your Possibilities and Unleash Your Inner Potentials”.

We had great line up of speakers like our very own Chairman Tan Sri Tajuddin Ali, Ms Sumitra from Women’s Aid Organisation, Dato’ Sheikh Muszaphar the first Malaysian Astronaut Ms Christy Ng, one of Malaysia’s most well known footwear entrepreneur, Ashran Dato’ Ghazi—President of Malaysian Association of Bumiputera ICT Industry & Entrepreneurs (NEF), Chairman of New Entrepreneurs Foundation (myNEF), Chairman of myHarapan Youth Trust Foundation and the Deputy Chairman of Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Foundation. We were also fortunate to have with us Ms Aliza Ali, Group Chairman of Chatime and En Adli from Autism Café Project sharing their colourful and extensive leadership experiences with the scholars.
From 17th to 21st August 2019, Yayasan Khazanah Undergraduate scholars participated in CBL (Community Based Learning), which aims to further develop their leadership. Scholars were assigned into three community development teams and a facilitator from the partnering NGOs (Projek Iqra’, Kindness Malaysia and OrphanCare) was assigned to each team for guidance.

Scholars were required to complete a short term project and plan for a long term one-year project during the CBL programme. Basic training on Project Management was given to scholars to give them an understanding of important areas to be considered in their proposed interventions for the NGOs. Below are the achievements by the scholars for their short term project with various NGOs.

**OrphanCare Team’s Short Term Project**
- Started a social awareness campaign on Twitter that garnered more than 36,000 retweets and 1 million impressions.
- Produced promotional videos by engaging local influencers.
- Designed and printed bunting and other reading materials to guide mothers on the procedure of using Baby Hatch services (Baby Hatch is a safe place for babies whose birth mothers are desperate or in a state of mind that could endanger their newborns).

**Projek Iqra’ Team’s Short Term Project**
- Conducted a business fundamentals workshop for the kids in Pangsapuri Seri Purnama, who are currently running button badge business on their own.
- Sponsored Projek Iqra’ a printer that is very much in need to improve convenience in administrative tasks and preparing learning materials for the kids.

**Kindness Malaysia Team’s Short Term Project**
- Sponsored kitchen equipment to Rumah Al Haq to enable production of nasi lemak at a large scale.
- Profit from the nasi lemak will be used to fund the operating cost of the home and provide education for the children in need.
- Obtained RM1,500 worth of sponsorship in the form of a newly developed webpage for Rumah Al Haq to raise publicity of the home.
- Organised Zumba and Hygiene Programme for the kids at Rumah Al Haq.